

**INDIAN
CAPTIVITY**

**of
JONATHAN ALDER**

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By The Indians in 1782

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Jonathan Alder was born in New Jersey, about eight miles from Philadelphia, September 17th, 1773; when about seven years of age his parents removed to Wythe County, Va., and his father soon after died. In the succeeding March, (1782,) while out with his brother David hunting for a mare and her colt, he was taken prisoner by a small party of Indians. His brother, on the first alarm, ran and was pursued by some of the party. "At length," says Alder, "I saw them returning, leading my brother, while one was holding the handle of a spear that he had thrown at him and run into his body. As they approached, one of them stepped up and grasped him around the body while another pulled out the spear. I observed some flesh on the end of it which looked white, which I supposed came from his entrails. I moved to him and inquired if he was hurt, and he replied that he was; these were the last

words that passed between us; at that moment he turned pale and began to sink, and I was hurried on, and shortly after saw one of the barbarous wretches coming up with the scalp of my brother in his hand, shaking off the blood."

The Indians having also taken prisoner a Mrs. Martin, a neighbor of the Alders, with her young child, retreated towards their towns. Their route lay through the woods to the Big Sandy, down that stream to the Ohio, which they crossed, and thence went overland to the Scioto, near where Chillicothe now stands, and so on to a Mingo village on Mad River. Finding the child of Mrs. Martin burthensome, they soon killed and scalped it; the last member of her family was now destroyed, and she screamed in agony of grief; upon this one of the Indians caught her by the hair, and drawing the edge of his knife across her forehead cried "Sculp! sculp!" with the hope of stifling her cries, but, indifferent to life, she continued her screams, when they procured some switches, and whipped her until she was silent. The next day, young Alder having not risen, through fatigue and want of food, at the moment the word was given, saw, as his face was

to the north, the shadow of a man's arm with an uplifted tomahawk; he turned, and there stood an Indian, ready for the fatal blow; upon this he let down his arm and commenced feeling his head; he afterwards told Alder it had been his intention to have killed him, but as he turned he looked so smiling and pleasant that he could not strike, and on feeling his head, and noticing that his hair was black, the thought struck him that if he could only get him to his tribe he would make a good Indian, but all that saved him was the color of his hair.

After they crossed the Ohio they killed a bear and remained four days to dry the meat for packing, and to fry out the oil, which last they put in the intestines, having first turned and cleaned them.

The village to which Alder was taken belonged to the Mingo tribe, and was on the north side of Mad River, which, we should judge, was somewhere within or near the limits of what is now Logan County. As he entered he was obliged to run the gauntlet formed by young children, with switches. He passed through this ordeal with little or no injury, and was adopted into an Indian family. His Indian mother thoroughly washed him with soap

and warm water with herbs in it, previous to dressing him in the Indian costume, consisting of a calico shirt, breech clout, leggins and moccasins. The family having thus converted him into an Indian, were much pleased with their new member; but Jonathan was at first very homesick, thinking of his mother and brothers. Everything was strange about him, he was unable to speak a word of their language, their food disagreed with him, and, child-like he used to go out daily for more than a month and sit under a large walnut tree near the village, and cry for hours at a time over his deplorable situation. His Indian father was a chief of the Mingo tribe, named Succohanas, his Indian mother was named Winecheoh, and their daughters respectively answered to the good old English names of Mary, Hannah and Sally. Succohanos and Winecheoh were old people and had lost a son in whose place they had adopted Jonathan. They took pity on the little fellow, and did their best to comfort him, telling him that he would one day be restored to his mother and brothers. He says of them, "they could not have used their own son better, for which they shall always be held in the most grateful remembrance." His Indian sister Sally,

however, treated him "like a slave," and when out of humor applied to him, in the Indian tongue, the unlady-like epithet of "onorary (mean) lousy prisoner." Jonathan for a time lived with Mary, who had become the wife of the chief Col. Lewis. "In the fall of the year," says he, "the Indians would generally collect at our camp in the evening, to talk over their hunting expeditions, and I would sit up to listen to their stories, and frequently fell asleep just where I was sitting; after they left, Mary would fix my bed, and, with Col. Lewis, carefully take me up and carry me to it. On these occasions they would often say, supposing me to be asleep, 'Poor fellow, we have sat up too long for him. and he has fallen asleep on the cold ground,' and then how softly they would lay me down and cover me up. Oh! never have I. nor can I, express the affection I had for these two persons."

Jonathan, with other boys, went into Mad River to bathe and on one occasion came near drowning; he was taken out senseless, and some time elapsed before he recovered. He said, "I remember, after I got over my strangle, I became very sleepy, and thought I could draw my breath as well as ever; being overcome with drowsi-

ness, I laid down to sleep, which was the last I remembered. The act of drowning is nothing, but the coming to life is distressing. The boys, after they had brought me to, gave me a silver buckle, as an inducement not to tell the old folks of the occurrence, for fear they would not let me come with them again, and so the affair was kept secret."

When Alder had learned to speak the Indian language he became more contented. He said he would have lived very happy if he could have had good health, but for three or four years I was subject to very severe attacks of fever and ague. Their diet went very hard with me for a long time. Their chief living was meat and hominy; but we rarely had bread, and very little salt which was extremely scarce and dear, as well as milk and butter. Honey and sugar were plentiful and used a great deal in their cooking as well as their food. When he was old enough he was given an old English musket and was told that he must go out and learn to hunt, so he used to follow along the water courses, where mud turtles were plenty, and commenced his first essay upon them. He generally aimed under them as they lay

basking on the rocks, and when he struck the stone, they flew sometimes several feet in the air, which afforded great sport for the youthful marksman. Occasionally he killed a wild turkey or a raccoon, and when he returned to the village with his game, generally received high praise for his skill, the Indians telling him he would make "a great hunter one of these days." Alder remained with the Indians until after Wayne's treaty, in 1795. He was urged by them to be present on the occasion, to obtain a reservation of land which was to be given to each of the prisoners, but ignorant of its importance, he neglected going and lost the land.

Peace having been restored, Alder says, "I could now lie down without fear, and rise up and shake hands with both the Indian and the white man."

The summer after the treaty, while living on Big Darby, Lucas Sullivant made his appearance in that region surveying land, and soon became on terms of intimacy with Alder, who related to him a history of his life, and generously gave him the piece of land on which he dwelt; but there being some little difficulty about the title, Alder did not contest, and so lost it.

When the settlers first made their appearance on Darby, Alder could scarcely speak a word of English. He was then about twenty-four years of age, fifteen of which had been passed with the Indians. Two of the settlers kindly taught him to converse in English. He had taken up with a squaw for a wife some time previous, and now began to farm like the whites. He kept hogs, cows and horses, sold milk and butter to the Indians, horses and pork to the whites, and accumulated property. He soon was able to hire white laborers, and being dissatisfied with his squaw, a cross, peevish woman, wished to put her aside, get a wife from among the settlers, and live like them. Thoughts, too, of his mother and brothers began to obtrude, and the more he reflected his desire strengthened to know if they were living and to see them once more. He made inquiries for them but was at a loss to know how to begin, being ignorant of the name of even the state in which they were. When talking one day with John Moore, a companion of his, the latter questioned him where he was from, Alder replied that he was taken prisoner somewhere near a place called Greenbriar and that his people lived by a lead mine, to which he used fre-

quently to go to see the hands dig ore. Moore then asked him if he could recollect the names of any of his neighbors; after a little reflection he replied, "Yes! a family of Gulions that lived close by us." Upon this Moore dropped his head, as if in thought, and muttered to himself, "Gulions! Gulions!" and then raising up replied, "My father and myself were out in that country and we stopped at their house over one night and if your people are living, I can find them." Mr. Moore, after this, went to Wythe County and inquired for the family of Alder; but without success, as they had removed from their former residence. He put up advertisements in various places, stating the facts and where Alder was to be found, and then returned. Alder now abandoned all hopes of finding his family supposing them to be dead. Some time after, he and Moore were at Franklintown when he was informed there was a letter for him in the Post Office. It was from his brother Paul, stating that one of the advertisements was put up within six miles of him, and that he got it the next day. It contained the joyful news that his mother and brothers were living. Alder, in making preparations to start for Virginia, agreed to separate from his In-

dian wife, divide the property equally and take and leave her with her own people at Sandusky. But some difficulty occurred in satisfying her; he gave her all the cows, fourteen in number, worth \$20 each, seven horses and much other property, reserving to himself only two horses and the swine. Beside these was a small box, about six inches long, four wide and four deep, filled with silver amounting, probably, to about \$200, which he intended to take to make an equal division. But to this she objected, saying, the box was hers before marriage and she would not only have it, but all that it contained.

Alder says, "I saw I could not get it without making a fuss, and probably having a fight, and told her that if she would promise never to trouble or come back to me, she might have it, to which she agreed."

Moore accompanied him to his brother's house, as he was unaccustomed to travel among the whites. They arrived there, on horse back, at noon on the Sunday after new years. They walked up to the house and requested to have their horses fed, and pretending they were strangers, inquired who lived there. "I had concluded," says

Alder, "not to make myself known for some time, and eyed my brother very close, but did not recollect his features. I had always thought that I should have recognized my mother by a mole on her face; in the corner sat an old lady who, I supposed was her, although I could not tell, for when I was taken by the Indians her head was as black as a crow and now it was almost perfectly white. Two young women were present who eyed me very close, and I heard one of them whisper to the other, "he looks very much like Mark, (my brother.)" I saw they were about to discover me, and accordingly turned my chair around to my brother and said. "You say that your name is Alder?" "Yes" he replied, "my name is Paul Alder." "Well," I rejoined, "my name is Alder, too."

Now it is hardly necessary to describe our feelings at that time, but they were different from those I had when taken prisoner, and saw the Indian coming with my brother's scalp in his hand, shaking off the blood.

When I told my brother that my name was Alder, he rose to shake hands with me, so everjoyed that he could scarcely utter a word, and my old mother ran, threw her arms around me, while tears

rolled down her cheeks. The first words she spoke, after she grasped me in her arms were, "How you have grown," and then she told me of a dream she had.

Says she, "I dreamed that you had come to see me, and that you was a little onorary (mean) looking fellow, and I would not own you for my son; but now I find I was mistaken, that it is entirely the reverse, and I am proud to own you for my son." I told her I could remind her of a few circumstances that she would recollect, that took place before I was made captive. I then related various things, among which was that the negroes, on passing our house on Saturday evening, to spend Sundays with their wives, would beg pumpkins of her, and get her to roast them for them against their return on Monday morning. She recollected these circumstances, and said she had now no doubt of my being her son.

We passed the balance of the day in agreeable conversation, and I related to them the history of my captivity, my fears and doubts, of my grief and misery the first year after I was taken. My brothers at this time were all married, and Mark and John had moved from there. They were sent for, and came to see me; but

my half brother John had moved so far, that I never got to see him at all.

The first settlement of this county by the whites was in 1796. In the fall of 1795, Benjamin Springer came from Kentucky, selected some land about a mile north of Amity, on the west bank of Big Darby, which stream was named by the Indians from a Wyandott chief named Darby, who for a long time resided upon it, near the line of this and Union counties. Springer having made a clearing and built a cabin, moved his family to the place in the spring of 1796. The next year Wm. Lapin and Joshua and James Ewing settled in the same neighborhood.

Jonathan Alder was a captive among the Indians for fifteen years, and remained with the Indians until after Wayne's treaty in 1795. Springer settled near Alder and taught him the English language, which much endeared the latter to him. He reciprocated by not only supplying him with meat, but others of the early settlers who, had it not been for him, would have been

in danger of starvation. He also, on different occasions, saved some of the settlers from being killed by the Indians. In 1800 Mr. Joshua Ewing brought four sheep to his place which were strange animals to the Indians. One day an Indian was passing by, when the dog of the latter caught one of the sheep and Ewing shot him. The Indian would have shot Ewing in retaliation had not Alder, who was present, with much difficulty prevailed upon him to refrain. At the outbreak of the war of 1812, the Indian chiefs held a council, and sent a deputation to Alder to learn which side to espouse, saying that the British wished them to go and fight for them, promising to support their families. He advised them to remain neutral, and told them they need not be afraid of the Americans harming their women and children. They followed his advice, and became warm friends of the Americans.

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Madison County was organized in March, 1810, and named from James Madison, the fourth president of the United States.

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CANAAN TOWNSHIP

This township lies south of Darby, and on both sides of Darby Creek. Along this creek is where the first settlements of Madison County were commenced, as early as 1795, by Jonathan Alder. In the spring of 1796 Benjamin Springer, and his son-in-law, Osborn, settled a little north of where Amity now stands. In 1797, William Lapin and Mr. Jonathan Alder settled on Darby Creek, what now is Canaan Township, near its southern boundary, and his son, Henry Alder, lives on the farm. Lorenzo Beach, Luther Lane, Henderson Crabb, Sr., Dr. Charles McCloud, the Careys and the Taylors are among its early settlers.—(From Caldwell's Atlas of Madison County, Ohio, 1875.)

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